

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph from page 1, line 27, to page 2, line 9, with the following paragraph:

-- Various approaches have emerged in response to these challenges, none of which are entirely satisfactory. According to one approach, a packet pre-amble, which, for purposes of this disclosure, is a layer 1 construct in the parlance of the International Standards Organization (ISO) Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) Reference Model (even though it may technically be defined as a layer 2 construct according to some standards), is overwritten with the necessary proprietary packet control information before transmission over the backplane connection. The packet pre-amble is overwritten instead of simply augmenting the packet with the control information to allow for an in-band transmission, i.e., a transmission which occurs over the same signal lines as the packet itself without requiring additional clock cycles. After transmission of the packet over the backplane connection, the destination entity simply retrieves the necessary control information from the packet. --

Please replace the paragraph on page 11, lines 10-19, with the following paragraph:

--Fields 508 and 510 together comprise a virtual LAN (VLAN), an IEEE 802.1 construct which allows physically separate devices to be grouped together logically into a single broadcast domain. Field 508 is the VLAN op code field, and field 510 is the VLAN tag field. (For purposes of this disclosure, the VLAN op code field is the IEEE 802.1 compliant Ethertype field, and the VLAN tag field is the IEEE 802.1 compliant tag control information (TCI) field). The VLAN comprising fields 508 and 510 may be the outer VLAN of a plurality of nested VLANs. If a nested VLAN is present, the other VLANs in this nested grouping of VLANs is identified with numeral 512. In one implementation, the VLAN op code and tag fields are each 2 bytes, and each VLAN comprises 4 bytes.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 14, lines 1-8, with the following paragraph:

--The switching fabric then stores the ingress port identifier for the packet and the port state into the AFH header of the packet. Figure 8 illustrates one embodiment of the format of the AFH packet header after these values have been inserted. The switching fabric then stores the packet in a queue associated with the ~~previously~~ previously determined output port of the I/O blade. This queue is selected from a plurality of possible queues, each corresponding to different qualities of service or priorities. It determines the queue associated with the output port based on the EQoS value associated with the packet.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 16, lines 3-10, with the following paragraph:

--At the MSM backplane MAC controller, the processing identified with numeral 618 in Figure 6 is performed. The MAC controller copies control ~~information~~ information from the AFH header to the DID previously inserted into the packet at the MAC sub-layer after the MAC destination address field. This process is described in more detailed later on in this disclosure. The MAC controller then deletes the AFH header, and transmits the packet over one or more backplane connections to the egress I/O blade. The step of transmitting the packet over the backplane is identified with numeral 620 in Figure 6.—

Please replace the paragraph on page 19, lines 6-18, with the following paragraph:

--In one example, for transmission from an I/O blade to an MSM blade over one or more backplane connections in the previously discussed example ~~environment~~ environment, the data portion of the DID with the control information inserted has the format illustrated in Figure 12. In this example, field 1202 is an Ethertype Select bit which indicates which of two possible values the op code portion of the VLAN is set to. Field 1204 is a 4 bit port state value indicating the state of an ingress port of the switch. Examples of port states and the functions implied thereby were explained previously in the previous example environment section. Field 1206 is 1

bit reserved field. Field 1208 is a 2 bit value indicating one of three VLAN states: no VLAN was present when the packet was received by the switch, the VLAN was present and was equal to zero, or the VLAN was present and not equal to zero. As explained previously, this field is used to implement ingress mirroring. Field 1210 is an 8 bit value indicating the ingress port at which the packet was received at the switch.—

Please replace the paragraph on page 24, lines 3-14, with the following paragraph:

--The two or more entities may comprise a switch, and the control information may comprise an identifier of an ingress port at which the packet was received over a network. Alternatively, the control information may comprise ~~comprises~~ an identifier of an egress port at which the packet will or is expected to be transmitted over a network. The two or more entities may each comprise ASICs.--

Please replace the paragraph on page 25, lines 3-14, with the following paragraph:

--A flowchart of one example 2000 of this implementation is illustrated in Figure 20. In this example, the LUT maintains an association between ingress or egress ports, ~~each of which is associated with or representative of a backplane connection in~~ and the plurality of backplane connections. After or upon a packet arriving at one of the entities, step 2002 is performed. In step 2002, an access is made to the LUT using as an index an identifier of the ingress or egress port. Step 2004 is performed. In step 2004, one or more backplane connections (each of which ~~is~~ be represented by an egress port identifier ~~identifiers~~) associated with the ingress or egress ports is retrieved from the LUT. In addition, related QoS information may also be retrieved. This QoS information may be used to identify a queue into which the packet is stored before transmission over the one or more backplane connections. Step 2006 is then performed. In step 2006, the packet is communicated over the one or more egress ports associated with the one or more backplane connections.--